

**DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA HIGHWAY PATROL**

*The California Highway Patrol is a law enforcement and traffic safety agency reporting to  
Business, Transportation and Housing Agency Secretary Maria Contreras-Sweet and  
Governor Gray Davis.*



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September 4, 2001

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

01-31

**LABOR DAY WEEKEND BLOODIEST IN EIGHT YEARS ON HIGHWAYS**

**(SACRAMENTO)** Statewide accident statistics reveal this Labor Day weekend was the deadliest on California highways since 1993. California Highway Patrol statistics for the period beginning at 6 p.m. Friday, August 31 and ending at midnight Monday, Sept. 3, show 54 people died as a result of traffic collisions. By contrast, 39 people were killed on California roadways over the same period last year.

“What’s especially troubling is that 24 of the people killed were not wearing seatbelts; another three were motorcyclists who weren’t wearing helmets,” commented CHP Commissioner Dwight “Spike” Helmick. According to The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, California ranks first in the nation in safety belt usage at over 91%. “Just think how much better this holiday weekend could have been if that other eight percent would use their safety belts,” said Helmick.

The CHP is poised to launch a major public awareness campaign on safety belt usage as well as continued aggressive enforcement of the law. In addition, Jan. 1, 2002 a new law goes into effect expanding child booster seat requirements. All children less than six years old or weighing less than 60 pounds will have to ride in a booster seat. Current law requires a child to be in a safety seat until they are four years old and weigh at least 40 pounds.

The statewide CHP figures also show drunk driving arrests increased slightly over last year. Labor Day weekend, 2000 showed 1,320 DUI arrests compared with 1,377 this year.

**(Commissioner Helmick is available for interviews upon request)**

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